TL 7971

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The Indonesia Human Rights Campaign

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East Timor electronic mail conference project

Since late 1990, TAPOL has been running an Electronic mail (E-mail) conference on East Timor entitled **reg.easttimor**. Initially we went onto E-mail because it was cheaper than fax to keep in touch with a few people on the network overseas. However, with the creation of a special E-mail conference on East Timor, we entered a new era of communication with far greater benefits for speedy dissemination of information while at the same time placing a new burden on our time and resources.

The **reg.easttimor conference** is basically a bulletin-board for items of news, articles and urgent appeals about East Timor. The conference it networked through Greennet in the UK to Peacenet/IGC in North America and Pegasus in Australia.

At first many contacts in the worldwide East Timor network were reluctant to follow our lead because of the initial technical problems involved, plus the expence of buying a modem and joining an E-mail network. However, gradually more have taken the plunge. This has drastically improved the flow of information in the East Timor network. Whereas, until 1991, our annual solidarity group meetings grappled unsuccessfully with the problem of speedy information flow, the situation has greatly improved. Since its inception, the E-mail conference has attracted a large number of readers in many countries, particularly in the US and Canada, Japan, Australia, and a number of West European countries, especially Portugal. With more groups participating in the conference, more have also become contributors, uploading their own items for the network. Most recently, the Portuguese news agency, LUSA, has started taking reports from the conference. Publications like *Pacific News Bulletin* regularly reproduce items from the conference.

As the facilitator, TAPOL is primarily responsible for keeping the conference well supplied with information and devotes a considerable amount of time and effort to collecting information, researching the information received, typing up items to be uploaded, and accessing the E-mail which we do on average twice a day. Access is achieved through a computer-modem which enables us to link up to Greennet by phone.

The conference proved extremely valuable when the Santa Cruz massacre occurred in November 1991; literally hundreds of items were put on the conference at the time. The flow has continued ever since, keeping many organisations and individuals in the world-wide network up-to-date on the situation in East Timor. It has also been an important campaigning weapon, garnering support for special appeals. There has been a steady increase in the number of groups using the conference and items downloaded from it appear in magazines all round the world.

1993 Budget

By its very nature, an E-mail conference generates no income at all for the facilitator as there is no system which would able us to charge our readers. All that we can expect is some reciprocity with some readers making their own contributions in the form of topics loaded onto the conference. Costs for the East Timor E-mail conference have therefore had to be borne by TAPOL. Indeed, some potential subscribers to our bi-monthly *TAPOL Bulletin* may have decided not to subscribe as they can access information from E-mail free of charge.

Outlay consists basically of four items of expenditure: a monthly Greennet fee and payment for accessing Greennet, phone charges, research and networking, and labour costs.

Based on the past year's experience, the project's budget for 1993 is as follows:

Greennet fee and access charges	£ 600
Telephone charges	£ 250
Labour - 8 hours a week @ £5.00 an hour	£2,080
Research and networking	£1,000
Total budget	**£3,930**

The only way we can finance the project is with the help of grants.

London, 15 February 1993

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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

TAPOL has for several years been shouldering the burden of running an Electronic mail conference on East Timor. The costs are proving a serious drain on our limited resources so we are seeking special funding to cover the cost of this important aspect of our work.

Enclosed is the Project profile and budget.

Can we prevail upon your sympathy with the cause of the East Timor people to consider funding all or part of this Project? We need to raise the full amount involved within the next month or two. We would be most grateful for any contribution you feel able to make.

Carmel Budiardjo